

RESEARCH TOPIC

Using an ePortfolio as a catalyst for an auto-ethnographic study of researcher identity

Defining researcher identity can be problematic if it is seen as a strict linear process. However, in today's ever changing education context, the definition of researcher identity needs to be fluid, dynamic and capable of responding to the shifting sands of academic life.

The study presented in this poster initially explores how using the repository feature of an ePortfolio allows a researcher to build up a picture of their varied research interests over a period of time with a view to assimilating themes, trends and possibilities for future research. Using the research repository as outlined in this study, allows a researcher to continually monitor and reflect upon their research trends in an interactive, practical and dynamic manner. The ePortfolio is presented as a catalyst in the process of researcher identity formation in that it is an easily accessible stimulus that facilitates and promotes the gathering of and reflecting upon key research interests.

The poster presented outlines and draws from the literature pertaining to the key concepts underpinning the study – auto-ethnography, ePortfolios and researcher identity. It looks at the features of the ePortfolio repository and how they are used in the auto-ethnographic process. The poster also details how the next steps of the project will utilise the workspace and showcase features of the ePortfolio to further enhance the auto-ethnographic journey to researcher identity formation.

This poster is relevant to early-career stage researchers, those interested in auto-ethnography as a research method and those interested in the use of ePortfolios.



Researcher Profile

Dr Julie Uí Choistealbha is a Lecturer in Education in Marino Institute of Education. Julie is Director of the BSc in Education Studies Programme and also works in the School Placement Department. She previously worked as a primary school teacher, an induction coordinator for newly qualified teachers and as an Irish language teacher. Julie's research interests include work-based learning for undergraduate students of education (initial teacher education and education studies), the Irish language, and the role attitudes, perceptions and motivation play in the teaching and learning processes. Her current research focuses on the assessment of work based learning in the final year of undergraduate education degrees.

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What is auto-ethnography?

Auto-ethnography is a form of self-narrative that places the self within a social context

(Jupp, 2006)

Key words
Unpacking
Reflecting
Process and Product
Personal experience
Connections

What is an ePortfolio?

Arter and Spandel describe a portfolio as 'a purposeful collection' (1992, p.6) of a person's work. This study utilises an electronic portfolio – ePortfolio. Mahara is the web application used to build the ePortfolio <https://mahara.org/>. Mahara was chosen as it is customisable, flexible, free and compatible with Moodle. An ePortfolio works on three main levels:

1. **Repository** (storage and organisation of material)
2. **Workspace** (forums, journals, review, feedback)
3. **Showcase** (sharing of final product) (EUFolio, 2013)

Overview of the study:

This study initially explores how using the repository feature of an ePortfolio allows a researcher to build up a picture of their varied research interests over a period of time with a view to assimilating themes, trends and possibilities for future research. Following on from this, the study will document how the workspace and showcase features of the ePortfolio catalyse the auto-ethnographic process.

The Research Repository

Features used to date

- **Research Goals:** I outline my goals for the next set period of time.
- **Articles:** I list the articles that I am currently reading or articles that I have sourced that are of interest to me and my current work.
- **To explore further:** These are topics/ books/ articles that I am informed about and wish investigate further.
- **Key topics:** these are the key words that I feel define my areas of interest at present.
- **Currently Reading:** The main book that I am reading
- **To read next:** The book that I wish to read next
- **Most recent research activity:** A list of /images of presentations, papers, posters.
- **CPD courses of interest:** These are courses that I have done or would like to do.

Discussion

Researcher identity has shifted in recent years from being focused on boundaries, hierarchy and self definition to a 'continuous process of construction, deconstruction and reconstruction in the context of multiple and shifting collectives and relationships' (Henkel, 2010, p.10). This can be unsettling and challenging if one does not allow oneself the freedom to allow this cycle of construction, deconstruction and reconstruction to occur. In today's ever changing education climate, it is critical that professional development is 'continuing, active, social and related to practice' (Webster-Wright, 2009, p.703). Using the research repository as outlined in this study, allows a researcher to continually monitor and reflect on their research trends in an interactive, practical and dynamic manner.

'The portfolio used for professional development purposes in a teaching and learning context includes material and samples of work that provide critical examination of teaching and learning practices. Teachers reflect on and evaluate their own teaching practices: they are also able to engage in dialogue with others which helps to highlight the complexity and diversity of those teaching and learning practices'

(Klenowski, 2002, p. 23)

Next steps...

Using the workspace feature for:

- Collaboration with peers
- Feedback on research trends
- Research forum for peers
- Peer-review of work
- Developing external links
- Extension of existing research interests identified in the research repository
- Development of new research areas drawn from the research repository

Bibliography

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About Marino Institute of Education

Marino Institute of Education (MIE) is a Dublin-based teaching, learning and research community committed to promoting inclusion and excellence in education. It has a long and proud involvement with education, specifically initial teacher education (ITE), dating back over 100 years.

MIE's academic programmes are validated, quality assured and accredited by Trinity College Dublin, the University of Dublin. MIE is an Associated College of Trinity, and this relationship has deepened through the development of a joint academic strategy to promote closer and more extensive collaborations in teaching and research, including joint activities between the two institutes. Through the implementation of this joint academic strategy the strengths of Trinity will be leveraged with those of MIE, to enhance existing relationships and promote new synergies.

In the last decade, the academic mission and scope of MIE's activity has been re-envisioned to encompass a deeper understanding of education in and beyond the classroom, to incorporate the continuum of teacher education and the education of specialist education practitioners at early years, primary and further education levels. This is allied with a commitment to education studies encompassing non-traditional education settings and the wider education environment in a pluralist context.

MIE's Mission

MIE is a teaching, learning and research community committed to promoting inclusion and excellence in education. The dignity and potential of each person are central to our life, work and service.

MIE's Vision

MIE will be a centre of global consequence, in teaching and research in the field of education. Through collaboration and technology, it will extend its geographic boundaries and create momentum for the delivery of new, high quality, innovative programmes in education. MIE will build critical mass for world class research in partnership with others, and will foster university-school-community links that contribute to sustainable improvement and renewal across the entire education system.

MIE will extend its commitment and expertise in the area of inclusion by continuing to conduct research and providing education programmes to empower the socially disadvantaged. MIE will lead national and international dialogue regarding the opportunities and challenges pertaining to pluralism and diversity in education settings.